

F O C U S

**Fellowship Of Christians
United in Service**

P.O. Box 4561
Baltimore, Maryland 21212
(301) 435-3985

The Rev. T. Edward Helms, Director

FOCUS Ministries is an acronym for the Fellowship Of Christians United in Service. A group of people who believe that all of God's children are in need of and indeed entitled to pastoral care and counseling without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, or sexual orientation. We attempt only to meet the spiritual and psycho-social needs of those persons who are in crisis or life change situations who either do not have a pastor in their lives or do not at this time feel comfortable dealing with specific issues with their pastor.

FOCUS makes every effort to bring the persons in need into contact with appropriate support systems. For many this includes their family and Church, for others we may be the only "Church" they have for the moment. Because we are comprised of people with many religious and denominational backgrounds we offer ample opportunity for the people we become involved with to be able to find Church homes if they so desire.

Members of FOCUS meet each Sunday evening at 8:00 p.m. to share in Vesper Service and Holy Communion. This is our time to reflect on the week of a Ministry that includes Laity and Clergy hand in hand using the talents as God has given them.

Anyone wishing to become a part of FOCUS or who may know of someone in need of pastoral care and counseling may make that known to us by writing to the address on the cover or by phoning (301) 435-3985.

PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING

These services are offered to those in crisis or life change situation. We are especially prepared to be involved with AIDS patients and their families helping in situations of family distress and personal support.

All cases are assessed by Clergy and others are invited in as needed, with the consent of the patient or person in need.

We believe that ACTION speaks louder than WORDS, especially in times when one's emotions have been struck with news that will bring significant change in one's life. FOCUS is committed to the ideal of assisting those in need to restore peace and order to their lives through a ministry of Christian Social and Spiritual support.

GOALS

Because we know that many are ill in remote areas, and that even those in the metropolitan areas have families and friends in far away places, we hope to form FOCUS groups across the country. With this accomplished, we will then have a network of support regardless of how far apart a family might be.

The issue of housing for persons with AIDS who do not require hospitalization is a real problem. FOCUS is working to find ample funding to provide this service.

EDUCATION

FOCUS Ministries provides speakers to meet with groups of any size to share information on the care and support of persons with AIDS and their families. Because of the negative media reports, persons who are ill and their families have been inclined to avoid their established support systems. We hope that reaching out to the community at large and sharing with Churches and civic groups our experiences in this ministry, we will be able to reunite families and friends in a time when they really need each other.

FOCUS is funded entirely by private contributions. Your gift or memorial for a loved one is entirely tax deductible.

FOCUS

P.O. Box 4561

Baltimore, MD 21212

December 22, 1983

Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull
2831 Guilford Ave
Baltimore, MD 21218

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Mid-Atlantic District,

By this time you should have received and read the preliminary minutes of the Fall 1983 District Conference.

I have been instructed to write to you in regards to the two motions listed below.

"MOTION; THAT THE TASK FORCE ON THE LAITY RECOMMENDS THAT THE DISTRICT CLERK WRITE TO EACH LOCAL CHURCH (PASTOR OR WORSHIP COORDINATOR, VICE MODERATOR, AND LAY DELEGATE(S)) REQUESTING IT TO PLACE SPECIAL EMPHASIS DURING THE NEXT SIX MONTHS ON OUTREACH AND ACTIVITIES FOR THIRD WORLD PEOPLE, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING:

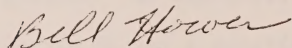
- a. opening their pulpits to Third World people.
- b. encouraging members to visit and engage in dialogue with existing Third World churches.
- c. holding racism workshops.
- d. placing ads in Third World papers and bars.
- e. sending Third World representatives to District and General Conferences.
- f. not supporting racist bars.
- g. creating white awareness reading and discussion groups.
- h. encouraging Third World people to train as deacons.
- i. using various styles of worship services.
- j. making visible Third World people in worship leadership beyond music ministry.
- k. including Third World people in local church decision making.
- l. including in membership classes a discussion of our commitment to Third World people as commanded in the gospels.
- m. supporting Third World caucuses and white caucuses.
- n. supporting outreach and ministries within Third World communities and also requesting that each congregation's report to the next District Conference include a report on the actions that were taken and the results of those actions.

MOTION: THAT THE DISTRICT SHOULD SET UP A SCHOLARSHIP FUND TO SUPPORT THIRD WORLD PEOPLE IN THEIR STUDIES AT SAMARITAN OR INSTITUTIONS OF THEIR CHOICE AND TO SUPPORT THE ATTENDANCE OF THIRD WORLD PEOPLE AT DISTRICT CONFERENCE; AND THAT THE DISTRICT CLERK WRITE TO EACH CONGREGATION IN THE DISTRICT, STATING THAT DISTRICT CONFERENCE ENCOURAGES THEM TO SET UP A SIMILAR FUND AT THE LOCAL LEVEL; AND THAT THE DISTRICT TASK FORCE ON THIRD WORLD MINISTRIES BE INSTRUCTED TO PRESENT PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTERING THE DISTRICT SCHOLARSHIP FUND TO THE NEXT DISTRICT CONFERENCE.

I call to your attention the motions from Third World Ministries which did not contain a directive for me to write and ask that you give these recommendations the same consideration as those listed above.

Again, best wishes for a joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Hower".

WILLIAM G. HOWER, District Clerk
MID-ATLANTIC DISTRICT, U.F.M.C.C.

474 Keswick Avenue
Glenside, PA 19038



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TOWARDS A PERSPECTIVE ON UNLEARNING RACISM: 12 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

Because racism is both institutional and attitudinal, effective strategies against it must recognize this dual character. The undoing of institutionalized racism must be accompanied by the unlearning of racist attitudes and beliefs. The unlearning of racist patterns of thought and action must guide the practice of political and social change.

The following assumptions offer a perspective for unlearning racism. I call them "working assumptions" for two reasons: 1) these are the assumptions I use in my own work with individuals and groups, 2) I have found these assumptions to be workable, i.e., effective in the practice of attitude change.

* * * * *

1. The systematic mistreatment of any group of people isolates and divides human beings from each other. This process is a hurt to all people. The division and isolation produced by racism is a hurt to people from all ethnic groups. The awareness that there is this division is itself a painful awareness.
2. Racism is not a genetic disease. No human being is born with racist attitudes and beliefs. Physical and cultural differences between human beings are not the cause of racism; these differences are used as the excuse to justify racism. (Analogy with sexism: anatomical differences between human males and females are not the cause of sexism; these differences are used as the excuse to justify the mistreatment of female human beings).
3. No young person acquires misinformation by their own free choice. Racist attitudes and beliefs are a mixture of misinformation and ignorance which has to be imposed upon young people through a painful process of social conditioning. "You have to be taught to hate and fear."
4. Misinformation is harmful to all human beings. Misinformation about peoples of color is harmful to all people. Having racist attitudes and beliefs is like having a clamp on one's mind. It distorts one's perceptions of reality. Two examples: the notion that there is something called "flesh color"; the use of the term "minorities" to describe the majority of the world's people.
5. No individual holds onto misinformation voluntarily. People hold onto racist beliefs and attitudes because this misinformation represents the best thinking they have been able to do at the present time, and because no one has been able to help them out of this misinformation.
6. People will change their minds about deeply held convictions under the following conditions: 1) the new position is presented in a way that makes sense to them, 2) they trust the person who is presenting this new position, 3) they are not being blamed for having had misinformation.

7. People hurt others because they themselves have been hurt. In this society we have all experienced systematic mistreatment as young people - often through physical violence, but also through the invalidation of our intelligence, the disregard of our feelings, the discounting of our abilities. As a result of these experiences, we tend both to internalize this mistreatment by accepting it as "the way things are", and to externalize it by mistreating others. Part of the process of unlearning racism involves becoming aware of how this cycle of mistreatment is perpetuated in day to day encounters and interactions.
8. As young people we have often witnessed despair and cynicism in the adults around us, and we have often been made to feel powerless in the face of injustice. Racism continues in part because people feel powerless to do anything about it.
9. There are times when we have failed to act, and times when we did not achieve as much as we wanted to in the struggle against racism. Unlearning racism also involves understanding the difficulties we have had and learning how to overcome them, without blaming ourselves for having had those difficulties.
10. The situation is not hopeless. People can grow and change; we are not condemned to repeat the past. Racist conditioning need not be a permanent state of affairs. It can be examined, analyzed and unlearned. Because this misinformation is glued together with painful emotion and held in place by frozen memories of distressing experiences, the process of unlearning this misinformation must take place on the emotional level as well as on the factual level.
11. We live in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic world, a world in which all people belong to ethnic groups. Misinformation about one's own ethnicity is often the flip side of misinformation about other people's ethnicity. For example, the notion that some ethnic groups are just "regular" or "plain" is the flip side of the notion that other ethnic groups are "different" or "exotic". Therefore a crucial part of unlearning racism is the recovery of accurate information about one's own ethnicity and cultural heritage. The process of recovering this information will show us that we all come from traditions in which we can take justified pride.
12. All people come from traditions which have a history of resistance to injustice, and every person has their own individual history of resistance to racist conditioning. This history deserves to be recalled and celebrated. Reclaiming one's own history of resistance is central to the project of acquiring an accurate account of one's own heritage. When people act from a sense of informed pride in themselves and their own traditions they will be more effective in all struggles for justice.

April 4, 1984

NETWORK OF WHITE PEOPLE AGAINST RACISM - UFMCC

Dear Friends:

At the urging of several people, a network mailing is being sent to you. The Network was originally started in 1981, after the Houston General Conference, in response to white people who really wanted to start taking some responsibility for our racism, and stop asking people of color to fix everything. Through the network, we shared joys and successes, workshop materials, and were able to be of some assistance to the makers of the first Third World Gay And Lesbian Christian Conference. But the network then went through a period of inactivity.

However, the work did not stop, and the movement has continued to grow. The list of "networkers" has also grown, and I am including it.

I will try to put in order some of the issues/questions that folks have brought to my attention:

1) The Network itself -- The Commission on Faith, Fellowship & Order is doing work in this area and may consider actually taking over the network (to give it an "institutional" tag.) Any feedback on that idea? Suggestions? Until a decision is made, I will keep up the list, and try to get out frequent mailings.

2) The Mid-Atlantic District has called for a national or international conference to be held early next year, 1985 (perhaps in February over "Presidents weekend"?) on institutional and personal racism (oriented towards whites). We need volunteers to offer their church/city, and to help organize the conference. Reverend Karen Van Gelder from Pittsburgh is head of a committee in the Mid-Atlantic District that is exploring this idea.

3) This year, October 5-7 is the second Third World Gay And Lesbian Christian Conference, which will be held at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Donations are urgently needed to make this conference possible and successful. Many Churches and groups are looking at fund raisers for this conference. Let us know what you are doing. All donations may be sent to: Reverend Renee McCoy, MCC-Harlem, POB 574, New York, NY 10030.

4) The Board of Elders passed the following resolutions at our meeting in March:

MOVED that the Board of Elders authorize the Fellowship offices to open a special account for scholarship monies and travel assistance for Third World people for the Third World Conference. The fund would be administered by the Board of Elders and the Director of Third World Ministries who would develop a process for the distribution of these funds. This fund is to be made up of voluntary contributions. (M-Harvey/2-White; Unanimous)

MOVED that the Board of Elders authorize the Fellowship offices to support Third World Ministries through producing and mailing newsletters, educational and promotional materials, both within the Universal Fellowship and to the media and the wider community. The copy will be written by Third World Ministries under the direction of the Director of Third World Ministries.
(M-Harvey/2-Mank; Unanimous)

MOVED that the Board of Elders go on record encouraging District Coordinators to challenge Districts to financially support travel and housing of at least two Third World persons to the Third World Conference, which in 1984 is being held in New York City.
(M-Harvey/2-White; Unanimous)

MOVED that we encourage Districts to being identifying "fields of labor" for beginning MCC congregations in Third World communities. The Board of Elders commits itself to assist the Department of Third World Ministries in a long-term project of research, and guideline for methods of Third World outreach throughout U.F.M.C.C.
(M-Wilson/2-Harvey; Unanimous)

5) if you want to contribute to that scholarship fund, send all monies to: Third World Ministries, UFMCC (put Scholarship Fund on the bottom of the check). Also, urge your District to fund two representatives.

6) I wrote an article for Journey magazine (April issue), that is all about "What Can A White Person Do" -- feedback is welcomed.

7) The Southwest District has invited Reverend Renee McCoy to be the special speaker at the May District Conference. They are attempting to have the same kind of focus and program about racism and Third World Ministry that was done last fall in the Mid-Atlantic District.

8) This is partisan politics, but also relevant to the different ways people are addressing racism: Many MCC people, including Reverend Perry, are involving themselves in the Jesse Jackson "Rainbow Coalition" campaign. Reverend Perry is, in fact, on the steering committee for Jackson. Let us know about your experiences if you are involved.

9) I am enclosing the 12 principles used by Rickie Sherover in her work with whites on their racism. These principles were enormously helpful in the workshop the Board of Elders did at our last meeting.

10) Let us know if you are doing work on a local Church, or District level. And send us materials to share! The Network lives!

Nanny Wilson

Use The Fellowship

Mailing address: 5300 Santa Monica Blvd #304
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Mia Anderson
Aben Kirkegruppe/MCC
Australiensvej; 13 III TV
Copenhagen O, Denmark

Teri Anglin
De Colores MCC
1875 N Avenue 52
Highland Park, CA 90042

Gertrude Baker
330 Tango
San Antonio, TX 78216

Rickie Banning
12165 Sanibel Court
Reston, VA 22091

Josie Barnard
8218 South 7th, #67
Phoenix, AZ 85040

Bruce Barton
MCC
POB 11321
Salt Lake City, UT 84147

Jim Becker
1819 N. Kingsley Drive, #311
Hollywood, CA 90027

Julie Benavides
MCC
POB 15576
Springfield, MA 01115

Rev. Delores Berry
MCC
1644 NE 24 Street
Portland, OR 97232

Kerry Brown
UFMCC
5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Pat Brown
978 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01603

Bob Bruso
37 Catherine Street
Worcester, MA 01605

Rev. Jennie Boyd Bull
MCC
POB 1145
Baltimore, MD 21203

Charles Butler
3740 39th Street NW
Washington, D. C. 20016

Michelle Carmondy
864 Chambers
Eugene, OR 97402

Rev. Lucia Chappelle
4301 Marmion Way
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Jan Collins
2302 East Lamna
Fresno, CA 93703

Rev. Clarence Crossman
POB 4724, Station D
London, Ontario N5W 5L7, Canada

Rev. Randy Cypherd

San Francisco, CA

Rev. Bonnie Daniel
1713 Miami Street
Leavenworth, KS 66048

Colleen Darraugh
Christos MCC
POB 1193, Station F
Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2T8, Canada

Rev. Bob Darst
MCC-Quad Cities
POB 4095
Davenport, IA 52808

Rev. Bern David
1200 North 7th, #225
Tucson, AZ 85705

Rev. F. Jay Deacon
139 West Newton Street
Boston, MA 02118

Rev. Susan Eenigenburg
254 Prospect Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11238

Mark Fenster
7854 Tampa Avenue
Reseda, CA 91335

Horacio Flores
A.P. 7-1423
Mexico, D.F., Mexico

Jeanette Garcia
POB 132
Desert Hot Springs, CA 92240

Mimi Gephart
DeColores MCC
1875 N Avenue 52
Highland Park, CA 90042

Jean Gralley
27146 West Six Mile Road
Redford, MI 48240

Rev. Shelley Hamilton
DeColores MCC
1875 N Avenue 52
Highland Park, CA 90042

Bruce Harmon
3192 Hailinger Circle
West Valley City, UT 84119

Rev. Rodger Harrison
St. Michael's MCC
POB 2942
Savannah, GA 31402

Beth Hildebrand
314 Johnson Street
Waterloo, IA 50702

Rev. Bruce Hill
Calvary MCC
POB 70
Redwood City, CA 94064

Ruth Holmes
POB 1333, Station A
Toronto, Ontario M5W 1G7, Canada

Terry Holt
2933 Moss Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Rev. Jan Johnson
MCC of the Ozarks
POB 92
Fayetteville, AR 72702

Rev. Bob Jones
New Life MCC
685 14th Street
Oakland, CA 94612

Carole Jones
10512 Cedar Avenue
Fairfax, VA 22030

Pat Killingsworth
867 Lafayette Park Place
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Jan Kraeve
MCC
POB 10102
Bakersfield, CA 93389

Carol Ann Kyrias
3223 North Clifton
Chicago, IL 60657

David C. Libbey
57 Austin Street
New Haven, CT 06515

Judi Longman
867 Lafayette Park Place
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Joe Lowth
POB 642
Newbury Park, CA 91320

Larry Lynch
858 Highland
San Mateo, CA 94401

Rev. Bjorn Marcussen
MCC
1231 Locust
Long Beach, CA 90813

Ralph Magallanes
1851 North Ivar Avenue, #500
Hollywood, CA 90028

Dorie Newcomb
2935 West Madison
Springfield, MO 65820

Rev. June Norris
1406 Stovall Drive, #14
Raleigh, NC 27606

Frodo Okulam
2814 NE 42
Portland, OR 97213

Rev. Jeff Padgett
Good Shepherd Parish MCC
615 West Wellington Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657

Rev. Betty Pederson
864 Chambers
Eugene, OR 97402

Rev. David Pelletier
POB 163175
Sacramento, CA 95816

Lyn Perry
5637 48th Avenue SW
Seattle, WA 98136

Ras Phillips
POB 78
Port Moresby
Papua, New Guinea

Paul Potter
1140 Castos, #47
Mountain View, CA 94062

Rhonda Pritchard
4517 South 35th Street
Omaha, NE 68131

Terry Rhea Cooper Purcell
903 14th Avenue, #2
Denver, CO 80218

Rev. Nancy Radclyffe
SLACC
POB 691566
Los Angeles, CA 90069

Rev. Marge Ragona
MCC
POB 8087
Pensacola, FL 32505

Lani Remington
MCC Nova
POB 602
Oakton, VA 22124

Sandra Robinson
MCC
POB 10009
Columbus, OH 43201

Larry Rodriguez
12077 Wilshire Blvd., #520
Los Angeles, CA 90025

Rev. Jodi Safier
Maranatha MCC
22577 Bayview
Hayward, CA 94541

Lloyd Samuels
1207 South Sandusky
Tulsa, OK 74112

Jane Sandmeier
535 North Simpson Street
Portland, OR 97217

Carol Schmidt
2227 Aaron Street
Los Angeles, CA 90026

Paula Schoenwether
4907 Avoca Street
Los Angeles, CA 90041

Marguerite Scroggie
535 North Simpson Street
Portland, OR 97217

Paul Sheldon
413-D Willow Street
Alameda, CA 94501

Sylvia Simms
1225 Telegraph
Bakersfield, CA 93305

Kelly Smith
502 South Catalina
Redondo Beach, CA 90277

Lois Southerly
8218 South Seventh Street, #46
Phoenix, AZ 85040

Coni Staff
254 Faxon Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94112

Hong Tan
448 Denning Road
London NW3 1S4, England

Rev. Vilma Torres
40-70 Hampton Street, #2J
Elmhurst, NY 11373

Ron Trusley
3030 North Seventh Street, #105
Phoenix, AZ 85014

Rev. LaPaula Turner
MCC
POB 10009
Columbus, OH 43201

Pat Underwood
MCC
1050 South Hill Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Rev. Donna Vinson
Reconciliation MCC
217 Carrier NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505

Lisa Wagaman
4049 West Pine, #208
St. Louis, MO 63108

Patti Wagner
620 Umbria Street
Los Angeles, CA 90042

Pat Warriner
6821 Middlecoff Way
Sacramento, CA 95822

Nancy Welton
5801 203 Street SW
Lynnwood, WA 98036

Marvin White
1616 18th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20009

Nancy Williams
830 East Jefferson
Boise, ID 83702

Rev. Gary Wilson
MCC
POB 12216
Seattle, WA 98112

Rev. Nancy L. Wilson
5300 Santa Monica Blvd., #304
Los Angeles, CA 90029

Marshall Williams
Good Shepherd Parish MCC
615 West Wellington Avenue
Chicago, IL 60657

Fluffy Ysaguirre
MCC
1050 South Hill Street
Los Angeles, CA 90015

Rev. Karen Ziegler
MCC
208 West 13th Street
New York, NY 10011

Black & White Men Together
POB 42257
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Alix Darlington
70 Prospect Park West
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Michael Gibson
POB 72
Woodbury, NJ 08096

Rev. Joseph Gilbert
619 Fitzgerald Street
Philadelphia, PA 19148

Jim Hensley
307 East Ridley Avenue, #3
Ridley Park, PA 19078

Sheila Petri
8400 Lindbergh Blvd., #505
Philadelphia, PA 19123

Bryon K. Rowe
60½ West Main Street
Mt. Joy, PA 17552

John Speer
3322 Arnold Street
Philadelphia, PA 19129

Jill Thompson
682 East Fifth Street
Brooklyn, NY 11218

Lila Wisotzki
3020 Barclay Street
Baltimore, MD 21218

